

Memorial Day: Honoring Our Nation's Heroes

For many of us, Memorial Day is an eagerly anticipated three day weekend in May. But for our nation's history and collective memory it is much, much more and quite rightly so. Originally called Decoration Day, Memorial Day is a national day of remembrance in honor of those who have died to obtain and preserve the freedoms that we enjoy each day as Americans. Memorial Day was officially proclaimed on May 5, 1868 by General John Logan, national commander of the Grand Army of the Republic, and was first observed on 30 May 1868, when flowers were placed on the graves of Union and Confederate soldiers at Arlington National Cemetery.

The Americans who are honored on this day are many as the casualties of our wars have been great despite the relative youth of the United States. Carefully consider these numbers:

American Revolution (1775-1783)	4,435 Killed in Battle
War of 1812 (1812-1815)	2,260 Killed in Battle
Civil War (1861-1865)	214,938 Killed in Battle
World War I (1917-1918)	53,402 Killed in Battle
World War II (1941-1945)	291,557 Killed in Battle
Korean War (1950-1953)	33,741 Killed In Battle
Viet Nam War (1964-1975)	47,424 Killed in Battle
First Gulf War (1990-1991)	147 Killed in Battle
Iraq War (2003...)	4,080 Killed in Battle (<i>as of 5/18/2008</i>)

Together there have been 654,446 Americans in uniform killed under arms since 1775 and another 525,930 who died while performing military service other than combat. Truly, *freedom is never free!*

Our Living Memorials

When the World War II Memorial opened several years ago in Washington DC, I had the privilege of accompanying my father-in-law for his first visit. He was clearly moved and shed more than a few tears as we walked through the site. He had served in World War II. He had been a Field Surgeon with General George Patton's Army in France treating the wounded as they were brought in from the battlefield. There was no question that he saw many horrible injuries and watched many brave men die even as he struggled to save their lives on the operating table.

One late Winter day in 1945 my father-in-law's unit had the misfortune to be moving through Allied territory as it was reoccupied by German forces. Their convoy came under attack and was quickly surrounded and neutralized. The Germans recognized that they were a medical unit and quickly separated the

officers (physicians and nurses) from the enlisted personnel hoping that their medical skills could be of use to them later.

That night the officers were able to escape. They made their way back through the German lines and were ultimately reunited with the Hospital and General Patton's Army. My father-in-law later learned that all of the enlisted had been immediately executed and that the Germans were killing all Allied prisoners rather than moving them. He cheated death, and helped to save many of those under his command by leading them to safety. For that he was awarded the Silver Star.

That day in Washington I didn't have to ask him whom his tears were for. I knew. They were his personal memorial to the drivers and technicians coldly executed by the Germans in that French forest, the young men who died on his operating table cheated by war out of a future, and the friends who went to fight with him but never came back. Today my father-in-law is an active 93 year-old who we are lucky to still have with us. Most of all, he, and those like him, are living memorials to the sacrifices that all members of our armed forces have made and continue to make each day so we can be free. On this Memorial Day I think of him and those who served with him who did not return.

Honoring the Fallen

On this Memorial Day there are many things that each of us can do to honor these individuals and to instill in our children (and reaffirm in ourselves) an awareness of their sacrifice...

- At 3:00 pm on Memorial Day there will be a **National Moment of Remembrance** for all Americans. Take a few minutes away from whatever you and the family are doing and pause for a moment of silence in their memory. Discuss with your children the meaning of that "Moment" and make it a family tradition.
- Visit a cemetery such as Arlington or the countless other Veteran's cemeteries throughout the United States and overseas. Place flags or flowers on the graves of our fallen heroes. Remember why there are such places and why they are so numerous.
- Visit a Memorial to the fallen such as those honoring our World War II or Viet Nam Veterans. Learn its history and the history of sacrifice that lead to its creation. See <http://dc.about.com/cs/sightseeing/a/monuments.htm> for a complete listing of Washington Area Memorials.
- Fly the American and/or the POW/MIA Flags at your home. Both are authorized by Congress for Memorial Day display. To learn more on proper display and handling of our flags visit <http://www.ushistory.org/betsy/flagetiq.html>.

Honoring (and Supporting) the Heroes Among Us

There are quiet heroes among us who also deserve to be honored on this Memorial Day, and every day, for their service to and sacrifice for our country. Today, the United States is engaged in military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. Whether we agree with the politics behind these conflicts or not, virtually all Americans agree with the correctness of supporting the soldiers, sailors and airmen currently fighting there.

In the DEA alone there are more than 450 members of the Ready Reserves; individuals who at any time could be deployed to Iraq and/or Afghanistan, are currently deployed there or who have already been deployed and have returned to their positions in our workforce. On this Memorial Day there are many things that we can do to honor these individuals and reaffirm our personal appreciation for their sacrifice...

- Thank a current member of the Active Military or Ready Reserves for their service.
- Thank a veteran for their past sacrifice and service to our country.
- As a Division/Office/Coworker, be aware of who your Ready Reservists are:
 - Who will be deployed/has activation orders; for when and where,
 - Who in their family will be staying behind and where, and
 - When is the deployed Employee returning to work.
- Assist those being deployed in the identification and accomplishment of the multiple out-processing tasks required by the Government and DEA.
- Keep in touch with those deployed via e-mail, phone or letter.
- Reach out to each deployee's family during their absence. Be involved as an office in supporting them. Work to keep them included in office social activities as part of the larger "DEA Family".
- Informally provide the deployee/family with any information you think might be relevant to their health or well-being (office activities, pay raises, changes in health insurance, important administrative deadlines, etc).
- Upon a deployee's return, hold an office welcoming event to ease their reintegration and convey appreciation for their service. Hold a separate evening or weekend event to show similar appreciation to their family members for their sacrifice.
- Consider establishing a **Band of Heroes** support group in your Division for Reservists and other Veterans. First started in the Washington Division, these groups can offer mutual support and a forum to discuss concerns and pass on

suggestions. (*For more information call Deputy Assistant Administrator Terry Parham at 202-307-5688 or EAP Specialist Dr. Mark Juhas at 202-307-5277.*)

- Display and or share the following with others...

Freedom Is Not Free

I watched the flag pass by one day.
It fluttered in the breeze.
A young Marine saluted it,
And then he stood at ease.

I looked at him in uniform
So young, so tall, so proud,
With hair cut square and eyes alert
He'd stand out in a crowd.

I thought how many men like him
had fallen through the years.
How many had died on foreign soil?
How many mothers' tears?

How many pilots' planes shot down?
How many died at sea?
How many foxholes were soldiers' graves?
No, freedom is not free.

I heard the sound of Taps one night,
When everything was still
I listened to the bugler play
And felt a sudden chill.

I wondered just how many times
That Taps had meant "Amen"
When a flag had draped a coffin
Of brother or a friend.

I thought of all the children,
Of mothers and the wives,
Of fathers, sons and husbands
with interrupted lives.

I thought about a graveyard
At the bottom of the sea
Of unmarked graves in Arlington...
No, freedom is not free.

Kelly Strong